

then I hope the other side would agree that lowering costs for seniors, lowering energy costs for families, and finding ways to preserve the planet are worthy causes that merit the attention of responsible legislators.

So let me say it again: I urge my Republican colleagues who are tired of MAGA, who know it is a formula for disaster, who know that it is, while embraced fiercely by a small group of extremists, it is not where the majority of Americans or even where the majority of Republicans want to go.

We have been reminded again and again that the extreme MAGA agenda is not only toxic but dangerous to our democracy. It condones and sometimes lies right in bed with those who urge violence to hurt America and destroy our democracy.

But, thank God, the American people have rejected that. If there is any lesson to derive from the midterms, that is certainly one of them. The American people don't like MAGA. They don't like hard-right nastiness. They don't like threats to democracy.

Look, I know the other side will not rid itself of MAGA overnight. And, unfortunately, some on the other side are hell-bent on doubling down on MAGA, but for the sake of the country and for the sake of the future of the Republican Party, we need to find ways to work together.

To borrow from a quote attributed to Sam Rayburn, anyone can kick a barn down, but it takes a good carpenter to build one back up. He, supposedly, used slightly more colorful language. I won't repeat that here, but you get the point.

I hope that good carpenters exist on both sides because there is still a lot of rebuilding to do across this country, and new building, new frontiers to launch bravely toward. As majority leader, I will do my best to find opportunities for both sides to work together.

So let us move forward together with fearlessness, with clarity of purpose, and with a ceaseless hunger to reward the trust that Americans have placed in all of us.

I thank my Democratic colleagues for the trust they have placed in me. I congratulate every single member of the leadership, and now let's roll up our sleeves and get back to work.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. President, now, there is still a lot to do before the end of the year. Later today, the House is scheduled to vote on the NDAA, and when it arrives here in the Senate, I hope both sides can come to agreement quickly, pass it, and send it to the President's desk.

Defense authorization and preservation of national security are important. I hope the Senate can act rather quickly. Equally important is funding the whole government, and we need to do whatever it takes to make that happen.

We need to make sure our whole government is postured to compete with

China, both at DOD and across the government. We need to fund our efforts to assist the Ukrainians. We need to fund our new commitments to our friends in Taiwan. While there is still more work to do before we bridge the gap, I am hopeful we can get a full government funding package done soon.

I want to remind everyone—I think people know it—that fully funding the government is the best outcome, not only for the public but for our service-members in uniform who work day and night to keep us safe. Short-term extensions will hinder their ability to work at full capacity.

I hope we don't go down that road, and I urge all sides to keep negotiating until we reach a solution.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask that the vote not occur until after comments by Leader McCONNELL.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF WESTERN KENTUCKY TORNADOES

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Kentucky is approaching the 1-year anniversary of one of the deadliest tornado outbreaks in our Commonwealth's history—1 year since 80 lives were lost and a deep scar was cut through Western Kentucky. We still remember the lost and pray for their loved ones.

A few days after the storm, I visited some of the hardest hit towns. I saw how the pictures of the damage in the newspaper and on television didn't even begin to capture the local devastation in places like Mayfield, Campbellsville, Bowling Green, and Dawson Springs. Homes were literally ripped off their foundations; trees scattered like twigs; whole neighborhoods gone in an instant. The pain is still fresh, but as I have seen in multiple return visits, slowly but surely, Western Kentucky is coming back.

This weekend, Kentuckians are carving out time to honor those whose lives were lost and continue helping those whose lives were severely disrupted. Dawson Springs just erected a beautiful, solemn memorial to the 19 residents that the city lost that day. In Bowling Green, an organization is delivering handmade Christmas ornaments to storm victims. In Mayfield, even as members of the high school football team fought to rebuild their families' lives off the field, the community cheered the team to an undefeated regular season. Even in tough times—

actually, especially in tough times—Kentuckians stick together.

I am thankful to all the volunteers and charities helping us in Kentucky remember this tragic anniversary and for all the men and women who spent days and weeks working tirelessly to remove debris and to rebuild.

Things are looking hopeful in the region this Christmas. Homes and businesses are coming back. Families will gather again under one roof. The road to recovery remains quite long, but Kentuckians will stand shoulder to shoulder until the rebuilding is done, and I will keep standing right beside them.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT AND GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, on another matter, yesterday, I explained a simple and obvious reality that will determine whether the NDAA and government funding legislation succeeds or fails. Here is the simple fact: Protecting America and supporting our troops is not some partisan Republican priority that we will cajole and reward Democrats into accepting. Providing for the common defense is a basic, minimum responsibility of those of us in government. Passing a Defense authorization bill and appropriating the money our military needs are not rightwing demands that Democrats get unrelated goodies for going along with. The Commander in Chief's own party does not get to take our troops hostage for unrelated policy aims. Democrats will not be getting special rewards for simply doing their job.

Yesterday, I praised the bipartisan deal that our Senate and House Armed Services Committees have struck on the NDAA. The House was supposed to advance the bill yesterday, but instead the Democratic majority fell into disarray.

Some Democrats want to scuttle the Defense bill by attaching unrelated liberal demands that would guarantee its collapse. Attaching partisan non sequiturs to this carefully negotiated NDAA would achieve one and only one outcome: It would ensure that neither the NDAA nor their wish list would become law. The only outcome that partisan game-playing would produce is the collapse of this bill—a massive injury for the U.S. Armed Forces at the hands of President Biden's party on President Biden's watch.

The House needs to send us the agreed-upon bipartisan NDAA and do so without delay.

The same reality applies to appropriations. Democrats just spent 2 years using the partisan reconciliation process to lavish trillions of extra dollars on liberal domestic demands while our Armed Forces were languishing on the back burner. The Biden administration printed and spent trillions on things like welfare and solar panels like there was no tomorrow, but they couldn't even assemble a budget proposal that sufficiently funded our troops.

So my friends across the aisle have zero standing to demand actually even

more—at this point, even more—liberal domestic spending in exchange for giving our Armed Forces what they actually need. Our Commander in Chief and his party have spent huge sums on domestic priorities outside the normal appropriations process without a penny for the Defense Department. Obviously, we won't allow them to now hijack the government funding process as well and take our troops hostage for even more spending.

Protecting America is our job. Republicans will not be bribing our Democratic colleagues with special treats, as if they need to be bargained into defending America. The sooner the Democrats fully accept this reality, the sooner we can get on with the people's business. That goes for both the NDAA and the government funding as well.

TRIBUTE TO ROB PORTMAN

Mr. President, now on one final matter, fewer than 40 miles from Ohio's border with Kentucky, about halfway between Cincinnati and Dayton, is a suburb called Lebanon. The corner of Main Street and Broadway looks much like it did almost a century ago in 1926. That is when a young couple, Robert and Virginia Jones, bought and renovated an unassuming brick building called the Golden Lamb Restaurant and Hotel. But the Golden Lamb's modest exterior conceals major history. Its prime location on the highway between Cincinnati and Columbus made it a key stopover for important travelers.

By 1926, each of our country's eight Presidents from Ohio, plus Henry Clay, plus a long list of other luminaries—every one of them had spent a night at this particular inn or at least broken bread in its dining room.

The Joneses' smalltown American entrepreneurial spirit wrote their family right into the history of American statesmanship. As it turned out, it also started a family tradition because a few years later, those newly minted innkeepers had a daughter named Joan, and then Joan and her husband Bill had their own kids. Although Bill Portman would pass away just a few months before the swearing-in, his son would one day cap an incredible career in government by representing Ohio right here in the U.S. Senate.

As ROB explained in his maiden speech, he spent his own formative years in and around a different family business. Bill risked everything in early middle age to strike out and start an equipment business. Joan kept the books. And the way I have heard it, young ROB's own involvement was about as hands-on as it gets.

There wasn't just no nepotism, there was negative nepotism. One summer break, ROB was put to work grinding old paint off the trucks. Even his supervisor called it "the lowest job in the place."

This whole-team effort grew Portman Equipment from 5 jobs created to more than 300. ROB saw firsthand how growing prosperity, if it is done right, can create big win-wins for both small business owners and well-paid workers.

So there were two family businesses in ROB's bloodline: a crossroads where statesman hashed out consequential decisions and a company that created jobs and helped workers support their families. And our distinguished colleague has spent his career continuing both of those things at an even greater scale.

For decades now, from the executive branch to the House to the Senate, ROB's desk and phone line have been the site of history-changing conversations, just like his grandparents' inn, and he has worked to create a national climate where millions more Main Street entrepreneurs like his father can literally lift up workers and communities.

Now, I suspect that from time to time, ROB has felt like law, economics, and policy may not be so different from grinding paint off of rusty trucks; but the gifts and talents that our friend commands have been making an impact—an incredible impact.

Our future colleague was such a top-notch lawyer that he wound up as a young associate White House counsel and then Director of Legislative Affairs for President Bush 41. Then, he was such a whiz at the legislative process that his Ohio neighbors sent him back to Washington as their Congressman. Then, he was such a leader on economic policy that President Bush 43 made ROB U.S. Trade Representative and then turned around and asked him to run the Office of Management and Budget.

So no wonder ROB fit right in and hit the ground running when he came to the Senate in 2011.

Sometimes our friend even fit in a bit too well. See, ROB has a great talent for impersonations. He had spent several Presidential cycles impersonating some of our prior colleagues for Republican tickets' debate prep. ROB's talent became such an open secret that during the 2000 campaign, Joe Lieberman joked he was going to start dispatching ROB to handle campaign stops in his stead.

But the real reasons for ROB's impact are his deep knowledge, his work ethic, and his passion for finding his way through the thick of each consequential issue.

Our friend's focus on growth and prosperity landed him at the center of the most consequential tax reform in a generation. ROB spearheaded the complex overhaul of international tax policy that passed as part of the 2017 tax bill and helped unlock a literal tidal wave of growth, reinvestment, and job creation.

He spent long nights securing huge bipartisan wins on infrastructure policy—not unlike Ohio statesmen 150 years earlier may have discussed internal improvements around a wooden table at the Golden Lamb.

But ROB isn't just a macro-level policy whiz who focuses on topline numbers. As much as ROB is passionate about growing the overall pie, he also

knows that rising tides don't automatically lift every boat. Sometimes Ohioans and Americans face challenges that call for a special champion. So ROB stepped up. He has been one of this body's sharpest early-warning signals on crises like opioid addiction and human trafficking. He has used Congress' investigative powers to craft solutions, and he has built the relationships to make law.

The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act and its sequels have brought hope to families in Ohio and across the country who have battled the onslaught of opioids. The Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act forced Big Tech, kicking and screaming, to finally crack down on exploitation. And on and on, from international trade to national parks and everything in between.

Even at the tail end of a long session, ROB has been known to linger even longer in the Cloakroom, patiently resolving the last few objections to some final policy he has gotten all the way to the 1-yard line.

But even when you get results at this scale, even when you leave Ohio and our country in a better place, late-night policy vigils eventually lose their luster when you've got an even more appealing home front.

We know ROB loves public service, but we also know that even that passion comes second to his beloved wife and partner Jane and their three kids, Jed, Will, and Sally, who I know ROB considers his proudest accomplishment of all.

For years, Washington's and Ohio's great gain have been their sacrifice. So while the Senate is sorry to lose our friend, we can't be too upset that we now have to repay the favor.

So, ROB, congratulations on your outstanding service.

NOMINATION OF JEFFREY PAUL HOPKINS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm another highly qualified judicial nominee: Jeffrey Hopkins, who has been nominated to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio.

Judge Hopkins received his A.B. from Bowdoin College and his J.D. from the Ohio State University College of Law. After graduating from law school, Hopkins clerked for Judge Alan E. Norris, both on the Ohio Court of Appeals for the Tenth District and on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

For the last 25 years, Judge Jeffrey Hopkins has served with distinction as a Federal bankruptcy judge in the Southern District of Ohio. In this role, Judge Hopkins has presided over approximately 3,000 cases that have gone to verdict or judgement, and he served as chief judge of the district's bankruptcy court from 2014 to 2021. Prior to being appointed to the bench, Judge Hopkins worked as a litigator in private practice and served as Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Southern District of Ohio, where he became chief of the civil division in the U.S. Attorney's Office.